

# Governor Markell Sets Agenda for Unleashing the Potential of Delawareans

*State of the State proposals focus on creating jobs and economic growth*

**Dover, DE** – Governor Markell [laid out his priorities](#) for 2014 today, saying we must commit to unleashing the potential of every Delawarean by ensuring they have equal opportunities to acquire good education and training, find good jobs, and live in safe and vibrant communities.

“The premium in today’s economy is on the human factor – the creativity, the talent, and the drive in every one of us,” said Markell. “A society that squanders the potential of its people is a society that lets its future slip away.”

Delivering his annual State of the State address in the House Chamber, the Governor offered a path forward to help Delawareans make the most of their abilities. His agenda starts with better workforce training through efforts, like a scholarship that better prepares students for college and a program to help high school juniors and seniors acquire nationally recognized manufacturing certificates. The Governor also proposed:

- Infrastructure investments that create jobs and lay the foundation for future economic growth;
- Research grants to spur job-creating innovation;
- Improved educational opportunities for our youth through efforts to better support our youngest children, and attract and retain top teachers in our schools; and
- Policies to reduce crime, including focusing on ways to help ex-offenders and those suffering from addiction become productive members of society.

The Governor opened his speech by highlighting progress that has been made to strengthen the state over the past year, noting that Delaware's job growth has outpaced the national average, schools are better preparing our students, and businesses are dealing with clearer and fewer regulations than 12 months ago.

"But to paraphrase Will Rogers, even if we're on the right track, we'll get run over if we just sit here; we have so much more to do," said Markell. "If you have the right skills and live in the right communities, good-paying jobs are available. But for too many people, that's not reality. Every Delawarean has something to contribute if given the chance. We need to make sure they have that chance."

The new initiatives and proposed legislative action announced in the speech would advance that opportunity for Delawareans:

### **The Opportunity to Work**

- **Scholarship program:** allow low-income students to take college courses during their senior year, recognizing that these students will be more likely to enroll and persist in college.
- **Roadmap from the classroom to employment:** encourage employers to join a new initiative announced today in which DuPont will identify coursework and provide internships that will put students on a fast-track for opportunities in the company.
- **Support students taking accelerated career path:** a new, two-year, comprehensive program in manufacturing technologies for high school juniors and seniors will focus on mechanical, electrical, and computer engineering, and will lead to nationally recognized manufacturing certificates. In addition, the Delaware Manufacturing Association and the Manufacturing Extension Partnership are helping identify companies willing to offer students real-world opportunities

during the summer between junior and senior year.

- **Grant to support business-education collaboration:** a competitive grant program will fund public-private partnerships between employers and our schools and colleges that will develop the skills needed by tomorrow's workforce.

## **A Culture of Innovation**

- **Research Grants:** invest in innovation by creating a \$2 million matching grant program, leveraging federal dollars in support of research that will create the jobs of tomorrow.
- **Launch the Delaware Cyber Initiative:** a partnership between the University of Delaware, Delaware State University, Delaware Tech and the private sector that will build a collaborative learning and research network dedicated to cyber innovation in a field in which hundreds of unfilled jobs exist.

## **Investing in Delaware**

- **Transportation Investments:** \$1.1 billion in transportation network funding over 5 years, a \$500 million increase over the state's current financial plan to create good jobs and lay the foundation for future prosperity.
- **Clean Water for Delaware's Future Initiative:** clean up our waterways by upgrading wastewater and drinking water plants, improving stormwater infrastructure, and using cutting-edge technologies to remove toxic substances.

## **Opportunity to Learn**

- **Grow Nurse Family Partnership Program:** more than double the number of first-time mothers who are served by a program proven to improve opportunities for kids. Delaware would have a higher percentage of eligible

mothers participating than any other state.

- **Supporting STEM teachers:** the Delaware STEM Council, in partnership with Ashland, will give awards to support top STEM teachers so they remain in the classroom and can share effective teaching strategies.
- **Give school leaders more flexibility to address student needs:** propose giving some school leaders the ability to spend some state resources implementing their own school improvement plans, rather than be committed to a rigid funding formula. Tracking their choices and measuring their results will help show how to best provide greater flexibility to more schools.
- **Enhance teacher compensation system:** give the best teachers a path to receive additional compensation for pursuing leadership opportunities while remaining in the classroom, and recognize that our starting salaries are not competitive.

## **A New Day in Delaware Downtowns**

- **Create Downtown Development Districts:** designated areas in our cities will qualify for development incentives and a host of other benefits in housing and transportation. Builders would receive grants for a percentage of their investment.
- **Address Wilmington gun violence:** create a new Division of Special Investigations within the Department of Safety and Homeland Security to focus on gun-trafficking, recognizing gun violence is often committed by shooters who cannot legally own guns.
- **Improve treatment for substance abuse:** propose changes to better align state resources to fill the gaps in the drug treatment system, recognizing most men in the country are using an illegal substance when they are arrested and many of them can contribute if they receive treatment.

## **The Opportunity to Contribute**

- **Help ex-offenders reintegrate into society:** eliminate the arbitrary loss of a drivers' license for crimes that have nothing to do with automobiles, removing a barrier to employment.
- **Ban the Box:** address employment discrimination against ex-offenders who have repaid their debt to society by eliminating the box that says "check here if you've been convicted of a crime" for state employment jobs.
- **Reduce prison crowding:** create pre-trial, community supervision for non-violent offenders so the Department of Correction and social service providers can help get offenders to hearings, avoid trouble while awaiting trial, and be linked to needed services instead of waiting in prison. Another proposal would give judges greater discretion when it comes to concurrent and consecutive sentencing, recognizing Delaware is the only state that forces our judges, without exception, to impose consecutive sentences for multiple offenses.
- **Keep juveniles on the right path after they leave state custody:** fund community-based advocates to work with kids who leave Kids Department facilities. Advocates can help them and their families access mental health services and re-enroll in school.

The Governor will [unveil a balanced budget proposal](#) for Fiscal Year 2015 in his budget presentation next Thursday, January 30<sup>th</sup> at 1 p.m.

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